

English Section



Editor : Diljit Singh 'Bedi'

DAYS COMMEMORATING HISTORICAL EVENTS **(16th September to 15th October)**

- 16 Sep. (a) *Assassination of S. Ajit Singh and S. Lehna Singh Sandhawalia.*
(16-9-1843)
- (b) *Raja Bhim Chand of Bilaspur died. Guru Gobind Singh Sahib visited Bilaspur to join his last prayers.*
(16-9-1692)
- (c) *Students of Khalsa College Amritsar took out a protest procession to condemn police atrocities at Chando Kalan (Haryana). The Police entered the College campus and attacked the students injuring and arresting several of them.*
(16-9-1981)
- 18 Sep. (a) *Martyrdom of Bhai Shango Shah and Bhai Jit Mal (sons of Bibi Vero. daughter of Guru Hargobind Sahib) Bhai Udha (son of Bhai Khema Chandania) and Bhai Hari Das (brother of Bhai Mani Singh) etc.*
(18-9-1688)
- (b) *Coronation of Maharaja Dalip Singh, the youngest son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the last ruler of the Sikh Empire.*(18-9-1843)
- 20 Sep. (a) *Master Tara Singh elected as the president of S.G.P.C.*(20-9-1955)
- (b) *Akali leaders and Lal Bahadur Shastri (Home Minister) held talks on the issue of Punjabi Suba.*
(20-9-1961)
- (c) *Akali MLA's walked out of Punjab Assembly to protest against Police raid on Gurdwaras.*
(20-9-1961)
- 21 Sep. *Kaka Inderjit Singh, a small Sikh boy, was killed and his dead body was thrown in the well by the Police because he had raised pro- 'Punjabi Suba' slogans.*
(21-9-1960)
- 23 Sep. *Indian Government appointed three member cabinet committee comprising of Indira Gandhi, Mahanvir Tyagi, Y.B. Chavan to discuss the Punjab issue.*
(23-9-1965)
- 24 Sep. *The founder of the Singh Sabha Movement and a Sikh missionary Prof. Gurmukh Singh passed away.*
(24-9-1896)
- 25 Sep. (a) *Ban on Sword withdrawn.*
(25-9-1935)
- (b) *All Parties conference, held at Chandigarh, demanded return of Chandigarh to Punjab.*
(25-9-1969)

- 28 Sep. *Akali Dal condemned Gandhi's comments about sword. (28-9-1940)*
- 29 Sep. (a) *Firing at Baz Baz Ghat Calcutta. Several Sikh passengers of Komagata Maru Ship died in Police/army firing. (29-9-1914)*
(b) *Army left Darbar Sahib Central Area. (29-9-1984)*
- 30 Sep. *Indian Government banned sacred Sikh Sword in the domestic flights too. (30-9-1981)*
- 1 October *Master Tara Singh agreed to break his fast unto death on formation of a High Powered Commission to discuss the issue of Punjabi Suba. (1-10-1961)*
- 2 October *Sant Chanan Singh elected as the president of S.G.P.C. (2-10-1962)*
- 3 October *The Sikhs, under the command of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, captured the town of Rahon. (3-10-1710)*
- 5 October (a) *Baba Banda Singh Bahadur left Nanded for the Sikh Home-land. (5-10-1708)*
(b) *Sikhs took over the control of Gurdwara for Babe-Di-Ber, Sialkot (Pakistan) from the Mahant. (5-10-1920)*
(c) *S. Pritam Singh elected the president of S.G.P.C. (5-10-1952)*
- 7 October (a) *Death of Mata Sulakhni Ji (wife of Guru Nanak Sahib). (7-10-1539)*
(b) *Bhai Makhan Shah Lubana announced publically at Baba Bakala about installation of Guru Teg Bahadur Sahib as the 9th Nanak. (7-10-1664)*
- 8 October *Bhai Taru Singh resident of village Poohla district Lahore was arrested on charge of his helping the Sikhs and his scalp was removed when he spurned the purposal to embrace Islam. (8-10-1745)*
- 9 October *Dogra Dhian Singh killed Chet Singh (a close friend of Maharaja Kharak Singh). (9-10-1839)*
- 12 October *The committee of 25 Singhs took charge of Sri Akal Takhat Sahib under the leadership of Jathedar Teja Singh Bhuchar. (12-10-1920)*

In continuation with the last edition:

SRI GURU GOBIND SINGH JI

(1666-1708)

-S. Surjit Singh 'Gandhi'

We are taking pleasure while publishing these contents from the book '*History of the Sikh Gurus*' by S. Surjit Singh Gandhi former Head of Sikh History Research Board (SGPC).

A Critical Appraisal of the Achievements of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji at Paonta

The Guru Sahib's stay at Paonta marks a watershed in his career because it was pregnant with the consequences of significance. Here he enjoyed a comparative calm and thus found the opportunity to ponder over the sad plight of the man of God in India and made up his mind to wipe out the tears off his cheeks as far as it was possible. He employed all the means-literature, mythology, the tales of heroes and heroines to give new orientation to the outlook of the people and to make them fit to participate in the crusade which he wanted them to start and champion. It was here that his ideas matured and his plans ripened; his concept about the tyrants shed off his communal tinge and colour; but all was not well at Paonta. It was cut off from the rest of Punjab, and this being so, the Guru Ji could not keep himself in complete touch with the Sikhs with the result that the work of the spreading of Guru Sahib's Gospel suffered and the masands who were in charge of different dioceses, became awfully indifferent to their duties. Besides this, the inflow of money to the Guru Sahib's treasury could not match with the swelling expenditure of the Guru Ji. Masand-system failed to contribute to the multi-dimensional response which was fashioning, firstly because the masands kept the offerings with themselves instead of sending them to the Guru Ji, and secondly because of Guru Sahib's project of raising army, the expenditure was too heavy. Moreover, the masands were living a luxurious and a patterned life and were not dynamic enough to understand the scope, nature and direction of the Sikh movement and hence there was urgency to find out alternative means to do the job. They, because of their loose morals, too much worldliness, avarice, intransigent attitude, had lost their usefulness vis-a-vis the Sikh Movement.

BATTLE OF BHANGANI A.D.1688 (Version of Sikh Records)**Circumstances**

In September 1688, the Guru Sahib fought the battle of Bhangani against Fateh Shah and his allies. As to the circumstances which led to the battle, different versions are in vogue. The Sikh records state that Bhim Chand asked the Guru Ji for the loan of Parsadi Elephant which he wanted to lend splendour to the betrothal ceremony of his son. The Guru Ji refused to part with the animal, for he doubted the Raja's intensions. This embittered Bhim Chand's mind who avowed revenge from the Guru Ji. Bhim Chand consulted some of his brother chieftains, Raja Kirpal of Katoch among others, as to the course he should pursue. It was decided that the question should be finally taken up as soon as the impending marriage of Bhim Chand's son with the daughter of Fateh Shah was over and Fateh Shah himself had been consulted about it. In the meantime, the Guru Ji had retired to Paonta and become a great friend of Fateh Shah by amicably setting the disputes between him and the Raja of Nahan.

As the day of the marriage approached, the groom's marriage party started for Srinagar, the capital of Garhwal state. The shortest route to Srinagar passed through Paonta; but the Guru Ji refused to give them the passage in view of the fact he had no faith in Bhim Chand with whom a large number of soldiers accompanied. However, after a lot of higgling, the Guru Ji permitted only the bridegroom and a small number of officers to cross the ferry near Paonta. The rest of the party had to follow a circuitous route to reach Srinagar.

This happening enraged Bhim Chand still more and he began to look forward to the opportunity to give vent to his anger. The long-sought opportunity came when the Guru Ji sent rich presents through his Dewan Nand Chand to be given at the ceremony of Tambol. But the difficulties were immediately raised by Bhim Chand about the acceptance of the Guru Sahib's presents and he openly threatened if the presents of the Guru Ji were accepted, he would sever all connection with Fateh Shan and return without marrying his son. The outcome was that Nand Chand had to bring all the presents back. On his way back, Nand Chand was attacked by Bhim Chand but he was able to forge return safe and sound. After the marriage was over Bhim Chand held a conference with Fateh Shah and some other Hill Rajas present there, such as Kirpal of Katoch, Gopal of Guler, Hari Chand of Hadur, and the Raja of Jaswal. They all decided to attack the Guru Ji on their way back.

Three points

From the above account, three points clearly emerge: Firstly that the sole or the main cause was the estrangement between Bhim Chand and the Guru Ji, Secondly it was caused because of the Guru Sahib's refusal to loan out elephant to Raja and then to dis-allow passage to the marriage party through Paonta. Thirdly, Fateh Shah was forced by Bhim Chand to sever all relationship with the Guru Ji and then attack him.

Let us examine all these points carefully before we reach any conclusion. Let us examine first two points in the first instance. If we accept the authenticity of these points, the Guru Sahib's stay in Nahan territory must have been nominal, for he left Makhawal when the marriage of Bhim Chand's son with the daughter of Fateh Shah was impending and he came back immediately after the marriage ceremony was over. The view is upheld by the Sikh records unanimously. The Sikh Chroniclers view that Bhim Chand asked for a temporary loan of the animal on the occasion of his son's marriage also points to the conclusion that even when Bhim Chand was making preparations to proceed to Srinagar to celebrate his son's wedding, the Guru Ji was still at Makhawal. From the Guru Sahib's own account we learn that the Guru Ji left Paonta immediately after the battle of Bhangani. This being so, the Guru Sahib's stay at Nahan turns out to be a very short stay; but activities of the Guru Ji at Paonta- the construction of the fort, the preparation of the literature etc. were so varied that they could not be compressed within that short period. This being so, we have very good reasons to believe that he made somewhat protracted stay at Paonta. From this it follows that the Guru Ji must have not gone to Paonta immediately before the marriage of Bhim Chand's son. And if this is so, the entire story that the bitterness between the Guru Ji and Bhim Chand grew as a result of the Guru Sahib's refusal to lend the elephant on the marriage of his son falls to the ground. But it does not mean that Bhim Chand was well-disposed to the Guru Ji. In fact when Bhim Chand grew to the youthhood and took upon himself the responsibility of running the state, he took not of the activities of the Guru Ji at Makhawal and became keen in asserting his authority on the establishment of the Guru Ji and in the pride of his youth threw all cautions to the winds. To this purpose, he had made a unsuccessful attack on the Guru Ji. It is possible that Bhim Chand might have played his nefarious role-in as much as the instigation of Fateh Shah was concerned. But to attribute the outbreak of hostility between the Guru Ji and Fateh Shah solely to the enmity of Bhim Chand and to consider it the major cause of the war is too much for the historical analysis to justify.

No mention of Bhim Chand in Bachittar Natak

Another thing which fortifies our assumption is that in Bachittar Natak practically the only reliable evidence regarding the battle of Bhangani, there is no mention of Bhim Chand in connection with the battle. This fact in itself is significant particularly when the Sikh writers assert that Bhim Chand's enmity was the main cause for the clash. Moreover, had Bhim Chand been the sole or main cause for the battle, it was improbable that the Guru ji would so readily return to Kahlur immediately after the battle was over.

Cunningham's view only partially correct

Closely connected with this is the question: if Bhim Chand's enmity towards the Guru Ji was not the cause or the major cause, what else then, was responsible for the battle. Cunningham says that the Guru Ji seems to have endeavoured to mix himself up with the affairs of the half independent chiefs and to obtain a commanding influence over them, so as by degrees to establish a virtual independent principality, amid mountain fastnesses to serve as a basis of his operation against the Mughal Government. Cunningham's statement is only partially correct. It is doubtful whether the views of the Guru Ji had advanced to the extent of establishing an independent principality but there are definite indications in the Sikh records that the Guru Ji mixed himself up in the affairs of the Hill Chieftain and we feel that was exactly this in which the genesis of the battle of Bhangani can be found.

The real cause lay in politics of Hill states

The invitation of Medini Parkash to the Guru Ji to settle down in Srimour (later known as Nahan) was an act born not only of his admiration of the Guru Sahib's personality or adoration of his mission; but it was, also, a measure which was a proof of political sagacity and foresight. Medini Parkash did so, because he was convinced that the Guru Ji and his armed followers would prove beneficial for his state.

In close proximity to the Srimour State on the western side of Jumuna was the state of Garhwal. These two neighbouring states had borne enmity to each other for about four generations if not more.

The Rajas of Garhwal had some tangible reasons to hate the Sirmour house for its being an instrument in the hands of the Mughals who had been keen on depriving the rulers of Garhwal of their independent status. Moreover the Sirmour Rajas who were then basking in the sunshine of the Mughal favour, had seldom missed the opportunity of territorial gain at the expense of Garhwal.¹

The Kangra and Simla Hills had been brought under the sovereignty of the Mughals by the time of Jahangir. During the times of Shah Jahan, attempts

were made to bring Garhwal under the influence of the Mughal Rule. In 1635, Najabat Khan, the Faujdar of the country at the foot of the Kangra Hills was entrusted with the task of maintaining Mughal hegemony over Garhwal. Mandhata, the Grandfather of Medini Parkash helped him. The campaign failed, inspite of a few initial success. Najabat's failure cost him his Faujdari and Jagir although Sirmour ruler was allowed to retain the territory conquered in the initial stages. In 1654, Shah Jahan sent another expedition. Mandhata was again prevailed upon to render help. However, Mandhata expired before the campaign was actually launched, and his son and successor redeemed the promise made by his father. The campaign, being grand success, the ruler of Nahan was given the title of Subhak Parkash. He was given the territory of Kotaha which he occupied after expelling the zamindar of the area.

To Aurangzeb Raja Subhak Parkash rendered important services. He intercepted the correspondence between Dara who was in the Punjab making grantic efforts to gain the Mughal throne and Sulaiman who was, at the moment, a guest of Prithvi Shah, the Garhwal ruler.

With the twin purpose of bringing the ruler of Garhwal within the ambit of the Mughal influence and persuading him to hand over Sulaiman to the Mughals. Aurangzeb commissioned Ra'ad Khan to undertake the expedition. Subhak Parkash once again rendered much-needed help. As a result of this expedition, Subhak Parkash got the area, named Khala Khan identified in the Sirmour State Gazetteer with the modern Ilaqa of Kalagarh which lies near Dehra Dun.

Subhak Parkash expired in 1664 and Budh Parkash succeeded him. During his reign the Mughal Government stopped meting our preferential treatment of Budh Parkash. This was because Medini Shah (He was different from Medini Parkash of Nahan) the heir-apparent to the Garhwal Gaddi had handed over Sulaiman Shah ² to Aurangzeb in December 1660, and soon after when he became the Raja, he had recognised the Mughal Emperor as his suzerain.

In appreciation of this submission, Aurangzeb had handed back the Dun to the new Garhwal State ³.

Now the situation as it stood during Aurangzeb's reign was that with Nahan possessing Kalagarh, and Garhwal owning the Dun, the boundaries of the two rival states got mixed up in such a way that Aurangzeb was able to exploit the situation to his own advantage under such situation. Though there was an explosive arrangement, yet no open conflict occurred. In 1684, Budh Parkash and Medini Shah died and they were succeeded by Medini Parkash in Sirmour and Fateh Shah in Garhwal. 'Both the new Chiefs were ambitious men of ability and for that very reason, they were afraid of each other, While watching each other's moves on the

frontier; they had to be on guard against surprise attacks. 'It was in this background that Medini Parkash invited the Guru Ji to Sirmour state and allowed him to build a fort at Paonta, a place guarding the only convenient route⁴ from one state to the other.

The Guru Ji whose relations with Bhim Chand of Kahlur were strained welcomed the invitation and shifted his head-quarter to Paonta.

There was every likelihood of the Guru Ji being involved in the boundary dispute if it arose between these two rival states. But he tackled the problem with the finesse worthy of a great statesman. He improved relations between Sirmour and Garhwal. His success in accomplishing this task was indeed a miracle. It is said that the Guru Ji also made use of Ram Rai in getting the things straightened.

Plan to attack Paonta

With the passage of time, the relations between Sirmour and Garhwal got strained once again. Fateh Shah decided to break the agreement and bring all the disputed territory between the two states under him by force. As a first step in breaking Nahan resistance, the Garhwal ruler marched towards Paonta, which was so close to the border and as strategically placed that Fatch Shah felt it imperative to break the headquarter at Paonta. In this project, Fateh Shah was helped by the Chiefs⁵ of Dadhwar and Jaswal Gaji Chand of Chandel, Gopal and Hari Chand. The later Sikh chroniclers add the names of some other chiefs who joined Fateh Shah or at least participated in the deliberations that preceded the battle.

Fateh Shah Was Forestallad

The Guru Ji, however, forestalled Fateh Shah and checked the invading army at the point where it crossed the iver Giri into the Nahan and defeated it in the battle of Bhangani.

Battle at Bhangani

Pathan's treachery

The opposing forces met on the field of Bhangani, about 6 miles distant from Paonta . -on the plains between the Jamuna and the Giri not far from the city of Rajpura on the Mussoorie road. Just on the eve of the battle, the Pathan mercenaries under their leaders, Hayat Khan, Najabat Khan, Bhikhan Khan, who had in the been in the Guru Sahib's pay had mutinied and joined the Hill Chiefs. Only kale Khan with his one hundred men remained true to the Guru Ji. The armed mahants with the exception of their leader Kirpal also left him.

Notes and References:

- 1. Bal S.S. Garewal J.S.: Guru Gobind Singh, P.66*
- 2. Sarkar J.N. 'Aurangzeb Vol.iii,pp.563-65*
- 3. Dehra Doon Gazetteer, 171.*
- 4. Bal S.S. Grewal J.S.: Guru Gobind Singh, p. 70.*
- 5. Refer to Bachittar Natak*